

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9295

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

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SUBJECT: MALI-UPPER VOLTA BORDER DISPUTE

1. FOLLOWING IS TRANSLATION OF EDITORIAL WHICH AP-
PEARED IN MARCH 14 ISSUE "L'OBSERVATEUR" UNDER HEAD-
LINE "MALI-UPPER VOLTA, THREE MONTHS AFTER...."

2. QUOTE: IT HAS BEEN THREE MONTHS SINCE THE BORDER
DISPUTE WHICH HAS EXISTED BETWEEN OUR COUNTRY AND MALI
SINCE INDEPENDENCE HAS ENTERED ITS ACTIVE AND MILITARY
PHASE. FROM THE VERY FIRST, PERSONS OF GOOD WILL
THROUGHOUT THE AFRICAN CONTINENT, CONVINCED THAT THE
ONLY WARS AND VICTORY OF INTEREST TO THE AFRICAN PEOPLE
WERE THOSE WHICH WE MUST CONDUCT AND WIN AGAINST UNDER-
DEVELOPMENT, VOLUNTEERED TO PREVENT A COMPLETE BREAK BY
INCITING BOTH PARTIES TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO
THIS PROBLEM.

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A PERIOD OF MILITARY CONFLICT WAS THEREFORE FOLLOWED BY DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY. A COMMISSION OF MEDIATION OF THE OAU WAS CREATED UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF PRESIDENT EYADEMEA. BUT THREE MONTHS LATER WE MUST ADMIT THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED EXCEPT THAT WE LIVE A STRANGE SITUATION: NIETHER PEACE NOR WAR, WHICH MIGHT JUST BE THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM.

OF COURSE, THE LOME COMMISSION COULD NOT REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO SOLVE OVERNIGHT A CONFLICT WHICH HAS LASTED FOR TEN YEARS AND WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT IT HAS OBTAINED SOME RESULTS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, IT HAS ARRANGED A CEASE FIRE WHICH ITS MORAL AND POLITICAL AUTHORITY HAS BEEN ABLE TO GUARANTEE. THE MEDIATORS HAVE ALSO ENGAGED IN VARIOUS INVESTIGATIONS. HOWEVER SEVERAL QUESTION MARKS STILL REMAIN. FOR EXAMPLE, WE STILL DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THE MILITARY SUBCOMMISSION WHICH FINISHED ITS WORK IN UPPER VOLTA DURING THE FIRST DAYS OF JANUARY HAS BEEN ABLE TO DO THE SAME ON THE OTHER SIDE. THIS MEANS THAT WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THE DECISION OF THE LOME COMMUNIQUE BY WHICH BOTH PARTIES AGREED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE CONTESTED ZONE HAS BEEN HONORED BY THE MALIAN AUTHORITIES. THE QUESTION IS PARTICULARLY PERTINENT NOW THAT WELL-FOUNDED RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING TO THE EFFECT THAT THE MALI GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN OPERATING IN THE BELI AREA.

WHEN WILL THE LEGAL SUBCOMMISSION, WHICH HAS THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDING THE PROBLEM THROUGH VARIOUS DOCUMENTS, MAKE ITS CONCLUSION KNOWN, OR RATHER WHEN WILL IT RESUME ITS WORK?

THE CEAO SUMMIT WHICH WAS POSTPONED EARLIER FOR WELL-KNOWN REASONS IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE NEXT MONTH. ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROBLEM WILL BE RESOLVED BEFORE THEN SO THAT SUCH A MEETING CAN HAVE THE EXPECTED SUCCESS?

THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS WHICH ARE BING ASKED EACH DAY WITH INCREASED IMPATIENCE. PEOPLE LOOK AT NEWS-
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PAPERS AND LISTEN TO THE RADIO AND ARE FRUSTRATED BY THE LACK OF INFORMATION ON A PROBLEM WHICH CONCERNS THEM MORE THAN ANY OTHER. IS IT THAT THE PRESS AND RADIO ARE INCAPABLE OF DISCOVERING THE SECRET OF THE GODS, OR ARE GUILTY OF NOT SAYING WHAT THEY KNOW? WITH REFERENCE TO INTERNATIONAL OPINION, PREOCCUPIED, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, BY CRITICAL SITUATIONS IN THE NEAR EAST AND CYPRUS, THE PROBLEM, EVEN AT THE TIME OF GASSEGALO, HAS NOT BEEN

GIVEN THE ATTENTION WHICH WE WOULD LIKE. AFTER THREE MONTHS, THE SITUATION IS EVEN WORSE NOW THAT THE STRATEGIC AREA IN THE RED SEA HAS BECOME THE SITE OF A WAR BETWEEN THE ERITREANS AND ETHIOPIANS.

THREE MONTHS AFTER GASSEGALO WE ARE STILL WAITING. BUT WE WILL HAVE TO LEARN TO WAIT WITHOUT LOSING OUR VIGILANCE AND OUR DETERMINATION. UNQUOTEAM

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